

## Wannon Falls Scenic Reserve

**Location:** From Hamilton, take the Glenelg Highway to the Wannon River. This reserve is 65 ha and includes both banks and bed of the Wannon River at and below the falls. There are 2 main parts: the major part east of the river, including the Oval, and an area across the river from the falls where a path leads down the spine of a peninsula to the river. This side can be accessed by crossing the Wannon River at the Swimming Hole (200 m upstream from the falls) or, when the river is in flood, from the Wannon Bridge.

Picnic facilities and toilets are provided at the falls and the oval. Camping is restricted to the area near the barbecue facilities near the oval, and is strictly for overnight stays only. No camping is permitted in the adjacent bush areas and wood must not be collected from the reserve for campfires – either practice degrades the wildflower environment.

**Landform, geology and history:** The Wannon Falls are a classic "hard bed over soft" style in which a young (Quaternary), hard basalt lava flow is undermined by erosion of the softer, weathered lava and sediment beneath it to form a spectacular vertical drop of 30 m into a deep plunge-pool (pictured below, DL).



The lava flowed up the river from a larger flow near the confluence of the Grange Burn and Wannon River. Over the last million years or so the falls have migrated upstream to form the present gorge. More details of the geology of the Wannon and Nigretta Falls are available in a leaflet from the Hamilton Tourist Information Centre.

The landscape around the Falls is Dundas Tableland, consisting of laterised Tertiary sediments. A large portion of the reserve was alienated in the past, with areas set aside for a pine plantation, oval, overnight camping ground, roads and parking. Recently much damage was done in one area by removal of logs and consequent scalping of vegetation, and in other areas by dumping of garden refuse and off-site camping. Hopefully, these issues have been resolved. The reserve is currently managed by the Shire of Southern Grampians and is a major tourist destination in the region.

**Flora:** This is a rare remnant of the Dundas Tableland flora, with 193 species of native vascular flora recorded by HFNC. Orchids found here include Golden Moths, Maroon-hoods (thousands), Nodding Greenhoods and a few Wax-lip Orchids, Blue Fairies and Purple Beard Orchid that are not seen locally elsewhere. The oval itself is a sea of sundews, Yellow Rush-lily and Kangaroo Grass in early summer. A large area of Tussock-grass occurs on the lower slope below the Thomas Clark Lookout. Blackwood, Woolly Tea-tree, River Tea-tree, Prickly Moses, Tree Violet, Hard water Fern and River Red Gum may be seen in the gorge or along the river banks, while Manna Gum, Hedge Wattle, Sweet Bursaria, Cherry Ballart and Black Wattle

are more common on the slopes and elevated areas of the reserve.

Pine, Coastal Tea-tree, Sugar Gum, Spotted Gum, Blue Gum, WA Flowering Gum, Poplar, Early Black Wattle, Sallow Wattle and Gosford Wattle were also planted and flourish here, but efforts are being made to remove many of these and to replace them with indigenous species. The replanted area near the Falls is one example. A former 30-acre pine plantation along Morgiana Rd and adjacent to the Thomas Clark Lookout was cleared in 1992 and re-established with local native trees and shrubs by HFNC over 5 years, 1994 to 1999. The ground flora regenerated naturally. HFNC has also devoted much time to control of weeds in the reserve.

**Fauna:** Notable bird species recorded here include Peregrine Falcon and Powerful Owl. The latter was seen in a tree west of the oval, clutching a Common Ring-tailed Possum (pictured right, RB). Black

Wallaby and Eastern Grey Kangaroo are common, while Platypus and Water Rat may sometimes be seen in the river. Runs of Swamp Rat are evident in grassland areas and Echidna can sometimes be seen. Koalas are sometimes seen in the trees near the oval.



## Wannon Flora Reserve

**Location:** This 8 ha reserve (known locally as the 18-acre Reserve) is opposite the Boomerang Gate entrance to the Wannon Scenic Reserve on the north side of the Glenelg Hwy. It is bounded on 3 sides by the Glenelg Hwy, Wannon-Nigretta Rd and Powells La.

**Landform, geology and history:** The area is Dundas Tableland landform, with laterised sedimentary soils. A sheet of sand has been deposited here, from a former lagoon on the Wannon in this area. Part of the area was stripped of sand prior to 1958 and it served as a rubbish dump. HFNC undertook the fencing, management

and plant survey of the area from 1960, with annual excursions to pull thousands of Hedge Wattle seedlings (result of the disturbance) to restore a balance. The reserve is currently managed by Parks Victoria.

**Flora:** This is another rare remnant of the Dundas Tableland flora, with some 173 species of native vascular flora (HFNC record). Part of the reserve contains an area of heath, with a number of species not seen elsewhere along the Wannon or in the district. These species include Scrub Sheoak, Gorse Bitter-pea, Blue-spike Milkwort, Showy Podolepis, Shrub Violet,

Greencomb Spider Orchid and Plain-lip Spider Orchid. Tiger Orchids are also found here (pictured below left, DL). The only eucalypt is Manna Gum. Other trees include, Silver Banksia (pictured below right, RB) Cherry Ballart and Drooping Sheoak. Efforts are being made to remove the alien species Sallow Wattle, Harlequin Flower, Freesia and Angled Onion. With the exception of a few small patches burned in 1999 the reserve has not had fire since 1960 or earlier and a number of orchid species, including Thick-lip Spider Orchid and Red Beaks, have not been seen since the 1970s. A complete list of

native flora on the Reserves and river frontage from the Wannan Falls to Red Rd Bridge is available from HFNC (363 species, including Gaunt Rice-flower, Sticky Boobialla, Wedge-leaved Hopbush and Small-leaved Wax-flower).

**Fauna:** Notable species recorded here include Feathertail Glider and Koala. Woodland birds of note include Brown Treecreeper, Varied Sittella and Crested Shrike-tit.



## Nigretta Falls Scenic Reserve

**Location:** Follow the signposts from the Glenelg Hwy, 5 km west of Hamilton. Inside this 8-ha reserve, turn left to the car park at the western end where a platform provides an excellent view of the falls. Nearby, a stairway leads to the base of the falls and a swimming hole. A walking track along the fence from the car park leads to a viewing position alongside the falls. **Take care** in the rocky areas upstream of the falls – at least one person has slipped into a

channel and was swept over the falls onto the rocks below.

There is a swimming area upstream from the falls. Picnic facilities and parking is provided for in the central mown area of the reserve. Do not drive off other roads, since that destroys the wildflowers and causes erosion on the steep slopes.

**Landform, geology and history:**

Nigretta Falls and Wannon Falls lie within 10 km of each other on the Wannon River but they have quite different styles. The Nigretta Falls are a more interesting multi-channel cataract of smaller drops and bounces guided by patterns of joints in 410 million-year-old (Devonian) rhyolitic volcanic rock (i.e. not basalt). The water has enlarged the joints and plucked blocks out to form a series of complex cascades (pictured right, DL).

This land was part of Nigretta Station until about 1900. The reserve is managed now by the Shire of Southern Grampians. Blue Periwinkle, Iris, Phalaris and Gorse infest parts of the reserve; the garden plants originated from houses built here. Blue Periwinkle and Iris were noted in 1930 as growing over the ruins of the bluestone house. Since 2005 HFNC has attempted to eradicate Blue Periwinkle, a plant that smothers any other groundcover.

**Flora:** Much of the reserve has been alienated as a result of construction of roads, tracks, parking and picnic areas. Exotic species were planted in much of the remaining area. However, there are some indigenous species, including a stand of Drooping Sheoak, Tree Violet and Kangaroo Grass and many other grassland species. River Red Gum, Woolly Tea-tree and Native Broom grow in the river itself. Hop Goodenia is an unusual species that may be seen clinging to rocky areas near the falls.

